

SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE CHURCH

Ver. 1.0



CHURCH TECH TODAY
TECHNOLOGY FOR TODAY'S CHURCH



Contact Information

For more information on 78P, questions about this resource, or how we may be able to collaborate, please contact us through any of the avenues below.

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About 78P

78P was started back in 2004 by three college friends who were volunteers for a local youth ministry. The idea of being able to reach this next generation with the Gospel through alternative means was exciting; and as we entered unexplored territory we found that each of us brought a unique technological talent to the table. These talents combined became the perfect tool set for that youth ministry: web design, computer maintenance, video production, and programming. Since then, we have refined this calling to a single mission statement:

Effectively equipping and empowering others with technology for the body Of Christ

We have accomplished this task by enabling others to use technology well through modeling and mentoring as well as providing free services and resources. Inspired by Psalm 78, we have constantly held this Scripture as the heart of what we do.

*I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter hidden things, things from of old- what we have heard and known, what our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children; **we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, his power, and the wonders he has done.***

Psalm 78:2-4

About ChurchTechToday

ChurchTechToday was born out of the need to find a place to discuss how technology can truly impact the Church in positive ways, whether it be reducing administration with a church office, allowing para church organizations to connect with their members online, or simply to share the Gospel message through non-traditional channels.

About Lauren Hunter

Lauren Hunter is a church technology PR consultant (<http://lhpr.net>) and founder of ChurchTechToday, the #1 Church technology blog for pastors, church communicators, and leaders.

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Chapter 01

Social Media Basics



98% of people living in America use social media.ⁱ

In 2012, Facebook had 693 million active users, Google+ had 343 million active users, and Twitter had 288 million active users.ⁱⁱ

51% of churches said that at least one of their senior staff regularly blogs or updates social media.ⁱⁱⁱ

First off, you need to understand that this is not just something that we wanted to create for you and then turn around and move on to the next project. Social media is expanding, maturing, and changing at such a velocity that in six months the statistics we share with you may be out of date and the tips we provide will be ineffective.

Therefore, this document is going to be a living and breathing entity. We may update this document in three or six months and will provide it for you for free to download again.

Before we get too deep into using social media, here are four things that you need to figure out so that you can come up with a great strategy:

Know Who And Where Your Audience Is

The idea of knowing who your audience could be as basic as looking your church's congregation or the donors that give to your ministry. The target is identified and you now simply need to ask them via an email poll, face-to-face conversations, or a survey at church what social media networks they use and connect with them quickly and easily.

Of course, it gets complicated when you start wanting to reach people outside of your established audience. Want to use social media to connect with people who are currently not attending but live in your area? Want to network with churches in town or across the globe? Would you like to establish a whole online ministry? The better you can define this, the easier it will be to pick which social media networks you will want to invest in because you will know your target population. (Note: We will give some great target audiences and purposes in the chapters to come to help you identify which networks to invest in)

Know Who Will Be Creating The Content

This decision should not be taken lightly. Some churches get these wild ideas and then simply dump them onto a secretary who already has a million things on their plate or a pastor personally wants to see it succeed and while he can write a whole sermon, he does not know how to get what he wants to say into 140 characters.

At the same time, the person that is running the accounts may not be (and sometimes I would push, should not be) the same person. Have you thought about getting a volunteer who is great with social media to run the accounts and then become a constant stream of communication with the church staff for tweets, links, photos, and ideas to post? This account manager would never write the content, only manage it and ensure that people are seeing it frequently and engaging back with them.

Know What Are Your Limits

Churches that think they can do it all but do not put the time, creative energy, and sometimes money into it are kidding themselves and setting this project up for failure. You could have great intentions and in ten weeks, have completely forgotten about publishing online. And know this, a church Facebook Page or Twitter account that has not updated in three months is worse than none at all. It shows that you simply do not care or are so busy to not be able to tweet once in a while and will probably be too busy for them as a ministry member. Whatever you do, do it well.

There are three things that you need to consider when putting this project together initially: consistency, creativity, and networking. Consistency means that whatever standard you set today is what you will be doing in three or nine months. Want to post six tweets a day? Great! But if you cannot keep doing that, then you may want to start out slower. Creativity means that you start posting novel ideas, but quickly run out of things to say. Give yourself

space and freedom to come up with unique and great content with every post. And finally, networking means that you are not just posting on social networks but also engaging. Honestly, only 20-30% of your time should be posting something. The rest of your time should be networking. This includes responding to comments, commenting on friends and followers material, and looking for more people to engage with.

Know How You Should Approach Social Media

Every pastor knows that there are different forms of communication. You can talk at people or engage in a proper dialogue. Pretend you're speaking to your congregation members or new visitors like they are right in front of you. We want to treat them like people, not some Google+ link.

A common misconception is that social media for businesses and ministries is nothing more than a marketing tool and should be used to generate leads and increase click-through rates for a brand. However, social media really is best at generating brand loyalty. Once a relationship exists, your ministry will be on their mind and they may be visiting you the next time they think about coming to church.

Where To Next?

The next few chapters, we will look at the top three social networks and how you can use them best. Each one is unique and should be approached differently. Finally, the last chapter will help you put together a workable social media strategy for your church so you can hit the ground running. Be the end of this, we hope you will have a functioning strategy that will lead you to your social media goals.

Chapter 02

Facebook



The average Facebook user spends 405 minutes a week on the social media site.^{iv}

80% of social media users prefer to connect with brands through Facebook.^v

23% of Facebook's users check their account 5 or more times daily.^{vi}

77% of companies acquired customers from Facebook.^{vii}

There were 680 million monthly active users who used Facebook mobile products in 2012.^{viii}

Facebook was definitely not the start of social media nor was it the first successful one but right now, it is the most heavily used network with the most registered users, widest diversity in users, and powerful enough to shape the near future of social media.

In some regards, this network is the general defacto for churches to begin to engage with congregation members and potential future visitors. Youth groups thrive by engaging with teenagers online, small group volunteers coordinate all future activities via groups and pages, and the church's presence can be as diverse and powerful with videos, photos, events, and links to blog articles from your church's website.

The Network's Persona

Facebook has become known as the place where everyone is at online. For teenagers, you can find your friends and family. Adults have coworkers, spouses, children, and old high school friends they have not talked to in twenty years. It is a hub for online content where we share our real lives in the digital world.

If social media were a town, you could equate Facebook as the residential district. You know everyone in your feed, even if you had met them just once and everything is personal. The general mentality is that you meet people somewhere else (face-to-face, on your blog, and at conferences or work) and then personally connect with them on this social network.

This also means that your personal life is on display for all who connect with you. If you do not have privacy settings set up, everyone will be able to see photos of your children, what you did in college, and how you interact with people online.

The Network's Lingo

- **Status** – the question “*What is on your mind?*” is where you post your thoughts and feelings that you want your friends to read
- **Groups** – close circles of people that share and keep in touch
- **Pages** – profiles for businesses and brands to connect with people
- **Share** – posting someone else's status or content to your followers
- **Like** – a way to give positive feedback and connect with things you care about
- **Mention** – tagging your friends in text which links to their profile and notifies them
- **Timeline** – your collection of the photos, stories and experiences that tell your story
- **Lists** – a way to organize your friends' news feed.
- **Messages** – private message to someone
- **Graph Search** – a new way of finding people, pages, and common interests with real language questions.

The Network's Downside

The down side to Facebook for churches comes within how they treat organizations. Having gone public this year, Facebook's new ultimate goal is to keep their stocks up and therefore make money. Their first action was to make all of the businesses pay for a complete service.

Currently, posting a status update or sharing a link on your Facebook Page will only get it into 15-25% of your fan's news feeds, due to an algorithm developed by Facebook called EdgeRank. To be able to reach all 100% of your fans and more, you will have to pay for every post you wanted promoted. The cost will be between \$5 and \$20 depending upon how many fans you currently have.^x Even worse you have no way of privately communicating with fans.^x This makes for a terrible way to keep in touch.

An alternative is to create a Facebook Group. You can message your members directly, members of the group can see all of your posts all of the time, and you even have the options of it being private or closed so only certain people can join. Yet, there are numerous other problems including, no username URLs, what is said in the group comes up in their news feed but is not viewable on one's timeline and so nothing can go viral (think, zero referrals which is bad), there is nearly no customization options, no analytics, and you have a limit on how many people can be a part of your group (currently 5,000).^{xi}

How To Use The Network Effectively

A combined approach for churches should be used here.^{xii} In a general, public approach for the whole church's presence, you can use a Facebook Page. This will be seen as the central hub of the whole church's Facebook presence. Brand well, customize the tabs, link to your church's websites, and over a general set of status updates, photos, videos, and links. But do not mistake this for your primary way to communicate to people.

For the different parts of your ministry, use Facebook Groups. Your youth group, worship team, children's ministry, Bible studies, small groups, outreach ministries, and mission's trips can all have a group to communicate with the different members. This can become very troublesome if you have numerous ministries and may need to have several different people in charge of running your church's Facebook presence.

Smaller churches may want to consider doing a Facebook Page that is great for simple communications to both your congregation and those that may not be attending your church yet and then a second option with a Group so that you can directly communicate with your congregation.

Chapter 03

Twitter



*32% of all Internet users are using
Twitter.^{xiii}*

Only 23% of tweets get a reply.^{xiv}

*60-80% of your tweets should have
a link to achieve maximum
retweetability.^{xv}*

*Saturday and Sunday tweets have a
17% greater engagement rate
compared to weekdays.^{xvi}*

*56% of customer tweets to
companies are being ignored.^{xvii}*

Twitter's unique 140-character and marketing possibilities have made it a great place to network with others. Whether you're a professional blogger wanting to connect with other bloggers, a youth worker wanting to share ideas and learn from others, or a marketer looking to discover new content and what people are doing and using, you can do so easily here.

While businesses have learned to harness the power of Twitter, churches and ministries are just beginning to figure out its power. From a small scale, it is the perfect place to connect with other pastors and people that may help you better serve the ministry. In a large scale, you have the power to better understand your communities culture, influence it, and engage with a generation of people like never before.

The Network's Persona

Twitter is the place to consume information, whether it is the first breaking news of a terrible natural disaster, the release of Apple's latest gadget, or what you had for dinner. In just a short sentence, we need to be able to communicate exactly what we need to say. The art of communication is at work here: clarity, precision, and influence are all called on here.

If Facebook is seen as the residential part of a social media town, Twitter would be the media center, the newspaper, radio, and television stations that are broadcasting news. "Extra! Extra! This tweet has the 5 o'clock news!" People stay informed that can benefit both businesses and people personally.

In the same sense, it is a great tool for professionals to network with each other. After any short amount of time, users begin dialogues with others for many reasons. Pastors may find themselves connecting with other ministry leaders for personal and professional encouragement and empowering.

The Network's Lingo

- **Tweet** – The public post that is 140 characters or less
- **Following** – the basic networking action where you choose to follow tweets from a specific user
- **Followers** – those who choose to follow your tweets
- **Retweet** – sharing another user's single tweet to your followers
- **@Mention** – (styled with the @ symbol) citing a specific user in a tweet that automatically links to their account
- **#Hashtag** – (styled with the # symbol) used to mark a phrase that will allow for marketing or searching
- **Lists** – A custom group of people's tweets that you select to read separate from your general feed of all of your followers
- **Direct Message** – private message to only someone that follows you

The Network's Downside

The problem with Twitter and the Church is that so many voices are speaking into this medium that many times it can be difficult to sift through all of the noise. That first impression and all future tweets can define how people see you. If you are looking to draw people into your church's doors, simply announcing your church times will not work. You will need to invest a lot of time in building relationships to gain credibility.

At the same time, can you truly communicate everything you want to say in so few of words? In many regards, we are spitting out little bits of information, quotes, and thoughts but it is impossible to say the whole mission of a church, the entire message of a sermon, or everything about the Christian faith in ten tweets, let alone one, single tweet. Our words are limited, but that does not mean our message has to be. But it does mean that every tweet has to be intentional.

How To Use The Network Effectively

Twitter's vast nature of consuming data makes it a perfect place to constantly tweet. Share photos of your church's building, how they are serving, or a community of people in worshipping God together.^{xviii} Have everyone tweet about your church with a specific hashtag. Maybe they will send out the main Bible verse of the sermon or a great quote from the pastor with #1stBaptistInChicago.^{xix} This is the perfect place for a group of Twitter users to come together and evangelize and disciple as one.

While tweet Bible verses or quotes is good, it is easy and typical. Think outside of the box. Missionaries can use Twitter to update their status for the home congregation, tweet the live streaming podcast as the service gets started, or send out specific prayer requests that the church would like the world to join in to present before God.^{xx}

Be a resource for others too. As a pastor, if you found some great stories or research for your sermon, share it with others to use for their own church. Tweet out ideas for serving cities better. In general, empower and equip others in ministry to do more for the Kingdom too.

At the same time, find other like-minded people to bounce ideas off of. Youth workers can find hundreds of others that are looking for a great sermon series, teenage game, or simply just encouragement. Worship leaders can find great presentation tips like motion backgrounds or ways to make the service more interactive. As much as you want to gain from this network, consider simply learning and growing from the people in it too.

Chapter 04

Google+



Only 8% of Americans 12 and older have a Google+ profile page.^{xxi}

The Google +1 button is used 5 billion times per day.^{xxii}

Websites using the +1 button generate 3.5x the Google+ visits than sites without the button.^{xxiii}

Google+ active users spend over 60 minutes a day across Google products.^{xxiv}

The game changer for Google+ is AuthorRank. Becoming a trusted G+ user that can increase your website's rank to the top of the first page is worth millions.^{xxv}

Google+ was born from Google as a new opportunity to data. The mission of Google has always been to be the place to find data and up to this point, they have been great at finding it. They can find facts all over the place with their complex algorithms and coding as well as web bots that have been to every part of the Internet.

But social networks presented a new kind of data that was less scientific and objective and more personal and subjective. But this personal data that we give out on social media sites is no less valuable. In fact, in some brief moments in the months and years, it can be the first news before it ever hits any website blog. And opinions many times can be a better resource than some single fact that we find on a website.

The Network's Persona

Google+ is the new social network on the block. They wanted users to know that they were not another Facebook clone because they wanted to do it differently, even going so far as to say that they are not a social network (though they are). Yet, the implications of Google+ are far reaching and powerful.

In this social media town, Google+'s place is in the business district. It is not just a place to post your opinion or network, though you can do both of those too. It is a place for personal and professional people and content as well as a site for churches to get their message out to current and future visitors.

Because of the short lifespan of Google+ to this point, there is a lot of shaping still happening. We do not know how much more maturing there will be before it begins to plateau. Every social network to this point has impacted the social media world for the better and Google+ is in the midst of its revolutionary moments.

The Network's Lingo

- **Status** – the question “*Share what’s new...*” prompts for you to post content onto your profile
- **Circles** – organized lists of the people you want to follow and the people who follow you
- **Reshare** – sharing another user’s single status post to your followers
- **+Mention** – (styled with the @ symbol) citing a specific user in a status post that automatically links to their account
- **#Hashtag** – (styled with the # symbol) used to mark a phrase that will allow for marketing or searching
- **+1** – a way to give positive feedback and connect with things you care about as well as affect SEO through AuthorRank
- **Chat** – private message to only someone that follows you
- **Hangout** – private video chatting with between 1 and 9 other users
- **Hangout On Air** – public hangout that records to YouTube

The Network's Downside

Because Google+ is relatively new, the active user base is small compared to what the future could be. The dichotomy of the user base is that people are either hyperactive and vigilant for the network (Google+ can do no wrong and all other social networks are worthless)^{xxvi} or have not bought into the network at all and do not engage or post.

Unfortunately, while we will share a lot of great things about the network, it was very late to the game. In some regards, they have to “play by the social media rules” to garner and attract new users instead of have already defined them. At this point, they are fighting an uphill battle (though doing it rather well).

How To Use The Network Effectively

Churches have a unique opportunity to put themselves in front of a lot of people and use Google+ unlike many other businesses. With Google's normal search, they use a search of complex rules, web bots, and algorithms called PageRank. With Google+, they have a new source of information unlike anything they have tapped into before and have developed AuthorRank. The idea is that people who are seen as important, credible, and respecting on Google+ will be given higher search ranks. Therefore, the more comments, +1's, and reshares you receive, the higher your AuthorRank will be.

Along with the digital version of AuthorRank, you can use the Local feature in Google to receive reviews of your church, have people rate the physical, face-to-face part of your ministry that will also speak into your AuthorRank. Therefore, your social network influence can reach every single person that uses Google.

Finally, many churches have found that they can use Google+'s Hangout On Air for many different video options. Pastors can use it to record video blog posts or network with other ministry partners that may be hundreds or thousands of miles away. Churches can invite missionaries they support from all over the world to speak to their congregations or individual Bible studies. And the most innovate feature is that churches have begun to use it to live stream and podcast different parts of their church, including Sunday sermons, for those that are in some way unable to attend.

Chapter 05

LinkedIn



*2 people join LinkedIn every second
and 84% of accounts are free^{xxvii}*

*Nearly 95% of all users are in a
LinkedIn group^{xxviii}*

*76% of users use LinkedIn to
research people and companies^{xxix}*

*33% of business users find LinkedIn
extremely important for growing
their network.^{xxx}*

*62% of LinkedIn business users
review company followers.^{xxxi}*

*There are over 10 million
endorsements given daily.^{xxxii}*

LinkedIn is considered by many to be the professional's social network, both from a company standpoint and individually. For some users, it is a place to find a job or do their research on a company they are applying towards. For some organizations, this is how they find out more about the professional life of an applicant and advertises jobs in a social network geared towards the professional life.

Yet, the power of LinkedIn goes beyond filling a job with a person and for users that are comfortable with their current career, businesses that are not looking to employ anyone, and people who are neither current employed nor looking, LinkedIn can still be a great resource for you. We offer up several tips not only for the individual pastor, but also for the church as a whole.

The Network's Persona

As previously stated, LinkedIn has become known as the professional social network. In our social media town, you could equate LinkedIn to the Department of Commerce, professional agencies, career counseling companies, job boards, and the downtown business district. People are networking over coffee, so busy that they have to buy hot dogs at a street vendor, and everyone is dressed to impress.

In many ways, LinkedIn is the same thing. Unlike most other social networks, this is not the place to be casual, but professional. Think of how you would go into a job interview and then digitize that process of thinking, attitude, and approach to relationships to the LinkedIn platform.

Churches have an interesting navigation into this realm where they not only try to be relational, but professional. For the youth worker, this may mean that we leave the goofiness behind for a time and share the impressiveness of your ministry. For churches that are all in with relational ministry, being able to brag about your ministry with the right stories that still talk about the numbers and facts.

The Network's Lingo

- **Status** – a professional update of blogs, media, or text content
- **Groups** – close circles of people by specific topics
- **Personal Account** – free and paid accounts for individual people to connect other contacts and businesses
- **Business Account** – a paid account that can connect and interact with contacts
- **Contacts** – accepted invitations to connect and to view each others profiles and network
- **Endorsement** – a formal, public and professional comment written to recommend a colleague or business partner
- **Degree of Connections** – users you have connected with (1st degree), friends of a friend (2nd degree), and friend of a friend of a friend (3rd degree)
- **Recommendations** – based off of location and degrees of connection
- **Find Jobs** – a way for contacts to interact with businesses for possible employment opportunities posted by companies

The Network's Downside

One of the most common perceptions of LinkedIn accounts is to go in, create your digital resume, and then leave it alone until you need it again. The problem is that most of the work that needs to be done frequently and consistently to maximize on your LinkedIn account, whether you are looking for a job, an employee, or network connections. The dumbest thing you could do is expect something amazing to happen within employment and networking from LinkedIn without putting in the necessary time, energy, and effort. Instead, let's take a look at how we can set our profile up for success and then go the extra mile with engagement and find LinkedIn gold.

Setting Up Your LinkedIn Profile For Success

Your LinkedIn account can become your entire professional life consolidated into one profile that tells your professional story effectively. To do this as a personal account, you need to make sure that you have everything present and be networking regularly. For those that want to setup a business account, you can use these tips as guidelines but know that there are subtle differences.

As with any resume that you might put together, ensure all information that you are putting into it is accurate, engaging, and compelling. Unlike a paper resume that you might submit, this profile is open for all you have networked with to see and so you must be careful to be truthful, even when you are being grandiose. You have one of two options here, tell the whole story of what you have done but potentially get lost in the clutter if there is too much or narrow it down to a niche that you want people to focus but risk your viewers missing out on something amazing, even if not directly related. You choose the path but understand the consequences that come with it.

Along with ensuring a compelling profile full of experiences, details are important. Make sure that you use action verbs in the description when adding descriptions to your different jobs in the past and present. Words like “communicated,” “organized,” “led,” and “taught” show what you did while directing it to a specific use-case. These words to readers will help them understand your passions, dedications, and ability to act where needed.

How To Use The Network Effectively

Effectively using LinkedIn may seem extremely similar compared to how you might network outside of social media. If you are a pastor in your community, you probably have done a lot to meet up with other local pastors, school systems, and community event planners to make yourself available whenever

you are needed. You take the time to get to know them, offer your services whenever feasible, and support their causes if appropriate. You should have that same attitude for your LinkedIn community.

When you take the time to setup your profile, find as many people on the social network that you work with on a regular basis as well as the numerous people that you want to connect with from your past. As you make those connections to contacts, you will be offered recommendations to 2nd and 3rd degree connections that might be appropriate. This is step one of beginning to engaging effectively.

The second step takes a different turn. You have the ability to like and comment on other people's status updates as with most other networks and we assume you can figure that part out. What we want to emphasize that is unique to LinkedIn is the ability to ask for and give out written recommendations and endorsements. We will offer some great next step ideas beyond the typical LinkedIn recommendations and endorsements in our ideas section, but here are some basic pro-tips.

- **Do Unto Others.** We need to make sure we are giving recommendations and endorsements to others as we would like to receive them. Why not take a 30-minute time slot once a month to go recommend and endorse your colleagues and friends.
- **Don't Hesitate To Ask.** Asking for a recommendation may be the best way to put your best foot forward. Be fickle about who you ask, but be bold.
- **Limit Your Skills And Experiences.** It is great to cover the breadth of what you can do in your skills and experiences, but only putting those that you excel at and getting numerous endorsements may have more positive benefits than listing everything and receiving minimal endorsements.

Chapter 06

YouTube



*6 billion hours of video are watched
each month on YouTube.^{xxxiii}*

*More than 1 billion unique users
visit YouTube each month.^{xxxiv}*

*100 hours of video are uploaded to
YouTube every minute^{xxxv}*

*YouTube mobile gets over 600
million views a day.^{xxxvi}*

*More than 50% of videos are rated
or commented up on registered
users.^{xxxvii}*

*100 million people take a social
action on YouTube every week.^{xxxviii}*

YouTube may be the most forward thinking website on the planet. As much as Facebook has revolutionized the Internet into a social place for people to communicate, YouTube is offering a medium that is still years ahead of its time. While Google may be the king of search engines and leaps and bounds ahead of the competition, YouTube is even more so with online videos. The process in which it takes to go from video idea to shooting on a phone, PC screen capturing, or a more traditional and edited sense has led to the leading video platform in the world.

But simply hearing that YouTube is a leader and something you may want to invest in is only the beginning. It should be noted that unlike other social media networks, a ton of time should be put into creating content for YouTube. Even if you are doing minimal effort with editing and production, coming up with great ideas and the whole process of creating the final product may mean more hours than you thought to commit. At the same time, YouTube is a social media network, so there needs to be engagement with fans, working with subscribers, and having a great strategy around this social network.

The Network's Persona

YouTube is the great restaurants in our social media town. Think Starbucks, Chipotle, and Chilis on one side of the street, P.F. Changs, Hard Rock Café, and Red Robin on the other side, with Five Guys, Smashburger, and Chick-fil-A right beside it. Not a single place that does not make your mouth water.

In this social media town, YouTube has so many different ways to consume media that allows for social media engagement that you simply have a buffet to choose from. Want to watch how-to videos, short video game play throughs, or morning church devotionals? Want to see the Skit Guys perform, music videos galore, or any number of Google+ Hangouts On Air? Refined or simple, short or long, spiritual or entertaining? You will find them all.

The Network's Lingo

- **Upload** – the process of getting your video onto YouTube
- **Video** – the specific medium used to start the conversation
- **Channel** – your profile page that houses all of your videos
- **Subscribers** – a list of people who have decided to follow you and automatically receive all of your future videos
- **Rating** – a five-star rating, a way to share with the author and others how you felt about the video
- **Share** – the ability to post the video to other social media networks or embed on your blog or website
- **Playlists** – grouping similar videos into a series list that when finished with one video in the series, will automatically begin the next
- **Comments** – express your thoughts to the author and others
- **Like** – showing appreciation or distaste for a video

The Network's Downside

YouTube's massive audience, consistent views by others, and attractiveness because of a different medium make it a viable option for anyone that can get their hands on a video camera. Yet, to go from "just posting videos" on YouTube to reaching significant subscriber levels and higher view counts may require that you refine your strategy to producing films and improving the talent as well as the hardware that you have. To produce premium-level content, you need to make sure that what you are presenting is entertaining, engaging, and well thought out.^{xxxix}

To fix this premium-level dilemma, you can try and throw money at the situation to buy a better camera, more lighting, a better editing computer and software, or a green screen.^{xl} What you cannot buy is creativity and ideas and this is the difference between going from okay content to great media. Learn

how to film well^{xli}, put the time into thinking through the project, and go the extra steps to filming something unbelievable.

YouTube Is A Place Of Authentically Connection

When we talk about YouTube being one of the biggest and most incorrectly used social media networks out there, we get a lot of inquisitive looks. YouTube a social network? Really? Think about it this way, instead of posting a link to a website, a status update, or a photo album, you are significantly limited only to posting videos. From there, you can connect with other people on the network, comment, share, and like what someone has posted. The medium is non-traditional but the concept still remains.

The amazing quality of video-only sharing is that you have the chance to be completely authentic with your audience. Facebook and Twitter texts are great for exchanging information but if you desire to be relational in what you do, inspire others to take up a cause, or build your tribe from a platform that is engaging, video is for you.

Within video, you have the chance to share your deep passion for your ministry, the hurt when a family loses a loved one, or the joy and excitement to make an announcement of a teenager saying yes to Jesus. As powerful as words can be, video has the potential to authentically engage on many deeper levels.

How To Use The Network Effectively

Although the video work is done long before someone begins to upload a video to YouTube, there are many steps afterwards that can extend the reach of your content even further. The first is a well-written description.

People are on YouTube to watch videos and so the text is a secondary part of the content, but to ignore it is to lose out on significant engagement with your audience. A brief one or two paragraph (maximum 7 sentences) can be written to describe the video, though giving away the ending is always annoying. Below this, share other places that the user can find more of your content, whether the original blog post that this is shared on, social media networks, or specific website locations that are relevant to the content that you are displaying on the website.

Not including Google's own search results from the billions of searches done every day, YouTube is actually the second largest search engine on the planet. This means optimized titles and keywords and proper tags per video are necessary to maximize your video visibility. YouTube helps with recommendations from your title, description, and previously entered tags so there is no reason to not have great tags for each video you enter.

The final post-upload activities are to put the final touches on each video. Maybe you have a playlist of sermons that you share online week, a weekly devotional, or a Monday morning sermon recap. Add your video to the playlist so that it can be viewed in continuation with the rest of the content.

Follow this up with a custom thumbnail for your video. You can use a preselected screenshot provided by YouTube, but providing your own screenshot with a little Photoshop to add cohesion to similar videos and a lower-third title will go the extra mile. It's these little details that can really make your channel engaging for your audience and may make them stay for an hour or more.

Chapter 07

Pinterest



80% of all posts are repins.^{xlii}

There are over 70 million registered users, with over 20 million of them active in the last month.^{xliii}

The average Pinterest user spends 98 minutes a month pinning.^{xliv}

43% of Pinterest users associate themselves with brands, compared to only 24% of Facebook users.^{xlv}

80% of all Pinterest users are women and 50% of users have children.^{xlvi}

The most popular age group on Pinterest is 25-34 year olds.^{xlvii}

Pinterest is a social media network that has broken the social network mold in so many different ways that many businesses, ministries, and individuals are not sure how to best use it. For some, they see a network that is only a place for women to pin recipes, clothing, and how-to's to give to their husbands. Others want to use images well but do not know where to begin with the network.

What professional social media and Pinterest users see is a viral social media network where pinning, repining, commenting, and favoriting is the way to double or triple their total social media traffic to their website or blog. Others see a place to find people with common interests within niche markets or interests. Finally, many people find this network to be a place to not only inspire them but push them to make their website and blogging a richer experience for users and viewers.

The Network's Persona

Pinterest, within in our social media town, is the downtown mall where people can go window-shopping and if they like what they see, they can go into the doors. Some see this place as a girl's only place, businesses have the opportunity to sell their products if it fits in this setting, and many are missing out because they are not giving it a chance.

In this social media town, Pinterest is more than the public perception and you will always find something new and amazing. Yet, it is truly a consume or provide something to be consumed network that requires people to invest in someway. How does this fit into the realm of a church? Can this be a good medium for churches to engage with their congregation or are we limiting our scope of social networks too much?

The Network's Lingo

- **Pin** – Posting an image onto your board with a description
- **Repin** – Sharing someone else's pin onto your own board
- **Boards** – A set of pins that are categorized by topics.
- **Followers** – People that subscribe to your individual boards
- **Follow All** – Subscribe to all of your boards
- **Comments** – Leaving a quick message on an individual pin
- **Like** – Marking a pin that you enjoyed

The Network's Downside

The downside of Pinterest is more on the potential users and their inability to engage with the social network. There is a stereotype with Pinterest that it is not for brands, men, or bloggers. Yet, if you find your niche and are able to capitalize on this unique medium with creativity and visual inspiration, this network can be a traffic and networking goldmine. But it takes a complete reorientation of your social networking strategy to think in a creative, visual medium rather than text conversations.

Because of the focus on the visuals, unless you are a visually creative wizard, you are going to be taking a lot of time to put into finding the right photograph, using Photoshop to edit these images, or come up with great graphics that visually communicate what you want from a website. This is not a simple iPhone photo taken last minute kind of social network. We are looking for stunning photographs, inspiring graphics, and something that tells an amazing story.

Pinterest, A Visually Oriented Network

Pinterest is a great social network for a church that wants to go to the next level. Yet everything that is introduced in Pinterest is not unique, but because visuals are the focus, it requires that you do it right to maximize impact on your network. When you are on Facebook, images are king but we are always trying to post text or links. Twitter always has more engagements with photos but we spend more time on hashtags and verbage. Google+ is now geared to graphics and photography, but we are not focused on them as much as we should be. Pinterest is the social network that will judge you if you do not do images well and stepping it up here will improve your social media usage everywhere else.

Whether you are posting a blog article about the latest sermon podcast, uploading photos from the youth ministry service project from the weekend, or creating an event for the Easter or Christmas service, shift your thinking from what you will write to how you will tell the story. This change will make it easier to use images as part of the story telling that can speak volumes to your followers and fans as you begin to add text to the post too.^{xlviii}

One way to do this right is to start with the image and tell the story from there. Have an amazing image of a child serving a hot meal to a homeless person? Write what happened in the article from the image that the viewers will see. Have a graphic that is an announcement? Post it and do not reiterate the details but instead build off of it with an event and even some great quotes about it if it is a reoccurring activity.

How To Use The Network Effectively

Using the network effectively begins before you even log into Pinterest. Push your ministry to make more of an effort on being intentional about your photos. When you take a picture of your church congregation, get faces and smiles. Nothing says Christ's love more than authentic joy in the middle of serving others and learning more about Him. Make sure that the environment is conducive to great images. That means more images, better content with great visuals in the picture, and a less distracting background (whether you blur it out with a manual focus or clear it out so that it simply is not there).

This may require that you find key congregation members that have photography backgrounds, graphic artistic abilities, or invest in the current volunteers and staff that would be willing to grow in these areas. It is not a simple Pinterest investment, but a holistic marketing approach.

Even more so, develop a network of people that are pinning and repining like-minded content on your follow list. This will require that you properly describe your pins, using well-crafted boards, and being consistent with posting your pins.

Pinterest is not a second-class social network and has the potential to be the most traffic that will go to your website and blog if done right. Make sure your images are not cluttered with text but you let the image speak for themselves, go outside the box with infographics that are related to your Sunday sermon, and be directive with your images as they call the view to action with worshipping God more, serving others better, or jumping into Scripture further and deeper.

Chapter 05

Your Church's Social Media Strategy



It is one thing for the church to know about social media and tweet some stuff or post a link on your Facebook page, and a whole other thing for you to actually take the time to actually come up with a working strategy. You need to understand that a target is necessary, goals are established to achieve, and everything is written down so that everyone involved is on the same page.

To make your church's own social media strategy, we came up with ten questions for you to answer as you put together your social media strategy and a brief description to further explain why we asked that question. Do not breeze past this part, this is what can make your social media process a success or a failure.

1. What is the purpose of your organization, blog, or product?

Social media is a great tool, but you need to know who you are and what you are going to be putting out there before you press forward with social media. Maybe you are investing too much in social media when you do not even know what the mission of your company is. Defining this is simply a good business practice.

2. What will be the purpose of using social media?

You need to know why you are using something, otherwise you will not have direction with your tools. Know what the end goal is of using these resources. If it is simply to market, then define that. But realize that social media has the ability to do more than simply getting out the details of your company. You can create a brand, community, and place to get the opinions and other resources from your viewers.

3. Who is your audience?

If you are a local company in a small town, Facebook may be the perfect place for you. If you are a large church in a big city, you may need to make sure you are present in several networks. Defining this allows you to not waste too much time in the wrong places. This may also take some researching on your part. Survey your current customers as well as new ones.

4. How many resources are you going to put into social networking?

Will you be paying someone to do this or doing it yourself? How much time to do you want to invest in this a day, week, or month? Will you be advertising these networks at church, in promotional flyers, on your website? Are you up for putting a little money down to promote your company or product? All of these need to be answered to be efficient.

5. How will you be measuring your success?

Will you use a web app like Klout or SproutSocial or simply use the built in analytic tools with Google or Facebook's Insight? If you simply rely on the number of fans or followers, you will miss the mark.

6. How are others who have a similar company mission doing social media?

If you know of others doing with social media, you may be able to incorporate better strategies and find new seasonal objectives for your social media accounts. Do the legwork and you will benefit from it.

7. How will you know that you have succeeded or failed after a time?

The prep work for our strategy is done, now we need to write down how we can measure this success. Do you want your followers to go somewhere to buy something? Are you intended to have them see your blog? Or maybe you simply want us as followers to see how brilliant you are, great. Come up with at least five goals.

8. Are those goals, highlighted above, specific and measurable?

Simply saying that you want to get more viewers is not a good strategy. How many more? Wanting to get retweeted five times a week is okay, but being more specific by stating that you want to be retweeted five times a week to at least 1,000 new people is better.

9. Are those goals clear and realistic?

If you are new to social media, do not expect to see your website blow up. At the same time, saying that you want fifty new people to see your website does not define if you want them to see an aspect of the website, your blog, or to interact with your featured products you are selling. Make sure your strategy is clear.

10. How are you going to adjust if you do not succeed with these goals?

Are you okay with having lower expectations or putting more resources into it. Failure in the short term does not mean failure in the long term. In fact, that may be what you need to achieve success. But if you create a presence in the social media networks and then abandon them, you have done WAY MORE HARM than good. It is better to not have a social media presence than to have one that shows you do not care.

BONUS: What challenges do you foresee with social media?

Will there be a learning curve for you or do you need to bring on a consultant to help define things for you? Are you committing too much time to this that it affects the product itself? Are you presenting a good brand?

Appendix A

Forms



RELEASE OF INFORMATION

I do do not consent to placing the personal information detailed below in my organization's social roster as well as photos taken at any church events. I understand giving consent is voluntary, and this information will be used FOR OFFICIAL purposes only. If I have dependents, I further authorize leadership to contact them for morale purposes. I understand that I may revoke this consent at any time.

NAME (Last, First, MI)		HOME ADDRESS	
HOME PHONE		ANNIVERSARY DATE	BIRTHDAY (NO YEAR)
SPOUSE NAME			BIRTHDAY (NO YEAR)
CHILD 1			BIRTHDAY
CHILD 2			BIRTHDAY
CHILD 3			BIRTHDAY
CHILD 4			BIRTHDAY
PRINTED NAME		SIGNATURE	DATE
<p>I <input type="checkbox"/> do <input type="checkbox"/> do not consent to placing my personal information as well as photos taken at any church events in my spouse's organizational social roster. I understand giving consent is voluntary, and this information will be used FOR OFFICIAL purposes only. Additionally, I authorize my spouse's leadership to contact me for morale purposes. I understand that I may revoke this consent at any time.</p>			
SPOUSES PRINTED NAME		SPOUSES SIGNATURE	DATE

Expires 31 August 2014

FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY WHEN FILLED IN

Appendix B

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